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WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon joined civil rights leaders and their families on the South Lawn of the White House today as President Bush signed into law the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization Act of 2006 (H.R. 9), extending the landmark civil rights legislation for another 25 years. Melancon, who voted for passage of the bill in the House earlier this month, was one of a select group of freshmen members of Congress invited to attend the ceremony.

"The Voting Rights Act tore down many of the racist practices that had barred African Americans from having a voice in our nation's democracy," said Melancon. **"Extending this historic legislation shows America's commitment to guaranteeing the right to vote to all citizens, regardless of race."**

Enacted by President Johnson on August 6, 1965, and expanded in 1975, the Voting Rights Act provided extensive protection to minority communities by prohibiting any voting practice that would abridge the right to vote on the basis of race. Any "test or device" for registering or voting was forbidden, effectively abolishing poll taxes and literacy tests.

The success of the Voting Rights Amendment has led to significant political achievement and greater minority representation at all levels of government. According to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, today there are more than 9,100 African American and 6,000 Latino elected officials across the country and the number of Asian Americans holding elected office has tripled.

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